



Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Land Management Plan Webinar Transcript December 9, 2013

Well good evening everyone.

Thank you for joining us today.

My name is Lisa Herron and I'm the Public Affairs Specialist for the US Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

Today's webinar will feature a presentation on the Land Management Plan that will guide management of national forest system lands of the Lake Tahoe Basin over the next fifteen years.

After the presentation we will take your questions via Live Meeting.

Let's take a moment to get acquainted with the Live Meeting screen.

The presentation is displayed in the center of the screen with a menu bar across the top.

You can view the attendees by selecting Attendees on the menu bar.

Display the conference call information by selecting Voice and Video.

Select more from the menu bar to see live captioning during the meeting.

The presentation is available for download by selecting Handouts from the menu bar.

The full screen button is on the lower right side of the window.

Press the Escape key to exit full screen.

During the question and answer period you may submit your questions by selecting Q & A in the menu bar and typing in your question.

The presentation will be archived for later viewing and sharing on the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's website at www.fs.usda.gov/ltbmu.

Now let me turn it over to Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Planning Staff Officer Mike LeFevre.

Thank you.

Welcome everyone.

We're hoping that this format will serve a lot of purposes in that you know the weather here at Tahoe has been in the minus degrees and having people come out in the middle of the night probably isn't the

best idea right now so hopefully this will make it more accessible for folks to join in on the question and answer and listen to the presentation.

I'm joined this evening by Denise Downie and Matt Dickinson who were co-team leaders for the Planning effort over the last couple of years.

You've also already heard from Lisa Herron who is the Assistant Public Affairs Officer and I am also joined in the room by Cheva Heck who is the Public Affairs Officer and hopefully this cadre of folks will be able to answer any questions you might have so once again welcome to our webinar.

So just a little overview of tonight's presentation.

We're going stay pretty focused on the last phase of our planning effort here which is moving toward the objection process so the purpose of tonight's presentation is to provide information on the draft decision and objection process and so we're going go back a little bit and talk about the history very briefly about the Planning effort because it has been going on for almost a decade now and I know it's hard to keep up with just where we are and then we'll talk about the current status.

Next we will go in to a little bit about where we're going and what the final steps of our planning effort look like.

We're going talk about the highlights of the selected alternative which is Alternative E and then kind of highlight the changes between the Draft EIS and Final EIS so you can see where we went from the comment period and Draft EIS to the current final and then a little bit about how to participate in the objection process which is relatively new to the Forest Service.

We will be one of the first national forests to use the objection process for land management planning.

So a little bit about our Forest Plan history, how we got here.

This effort started as far back as 2004 with the Pathway 2007 Effort.

That was a collaborative desired condition development effort that had significant public input and we joined with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, TRPA, the Lahontan Regional Water Board and the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.

All of the agencies at that time engaged in revising their respective plans.

TRPA has completed their regional plan. Both Lahontan and the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection have completed their TMDL planning and we're last of the three to put our Plan together.

Through 2007 to 2010 we developed our Forest Plan under the 2005 and the 2008 Planning Rules both of which were struck down by the courts causing us to kind of start over again in the spring of 2010.

At that time we began our Environmental Impact Statement.

Throughout all this time from 2004 to 2010 we conducted public scoping working towards a new forest revised plan.

In the summer of 2012 we released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a 90 day comment period.

We had public meetings associated with that.

Then from the fall of 2012 through the spring of 2013 our team worked hard to respond to the comments.

We received eighteen thousand five hundred comments and worked towards revising the Plan and the EIS, EIS based on those comments that we received.

Part of that effort was a review by the Pacific Southwest Research Station to confirm that our science was current and contemporary all of which lead us to November 22 which was when we released our Revised Plan with the Final EIS and the Draft Record of Decision.

That public notice began the objection period and that brings us to where we are today.

So I'm going turn it over to Denise who is going talk a little bit about the current status and some of the final steps as we complete the Forest Planning effort.

So as you just heard we're currently in our 60 day objection period which runs from November 23rd to January 21st.

This is an administrative review period and during this period anyone who objects to the Draft Decision that we published may file an objection if they have already provided substantive comment on the planning process.

This will be followed by an objection/resolution period lasting up to 90 days. During this time we will hold objection/resolution meetings that will be open to the public.

After that a Final Record of Decision will be published and the Plan will be, will go in to effect 30 days after that decision is signed so we expect to have new Plan in effect mid to late spring, 2014.

So what will change with the Revised Plan?

You're not going to see major changed in our management strategies with this Revised Plan.

On the ground actions and results will be very similar to what we're currently doing and our 1988 Plan has served us well so we're not looking at making any sharp right turns or left turns in our management strategies.

We want to continue to promote a balance of ecological and socioeconomic sustainability.

This means that we will continue to provide a broad spectrum of recreation opportunities and we will continue to maintain and enhance natural resource values that are so unique to the Tahoe Basin for future generations.

You will see that our management direction is revised.

It is modernized and simplified.

The Revised Plan is shorter and considerably less complex than our current Plan.

I would like to start talking about the changes between draft and final by talking a little bit about the comment period.

As Mike said we received somewhere around eighteen thousand five hundred comments on our Draft EIS.

It took us about more than six months of concentrated effort to compile and summarize and respond to these comments and to make changes in both the Plan and the EIS based on the comments and I can honestly say that we all think we have a better Plan and a better EIS thanks to your comments.

So some of the examples of the kinds of changes that we have made between draft and final.

We have clarified and expanded our analysis and incorporated new reference materials that were suggested to us both by the public commenters and by the Science Review Panel.

So for example you will see an expanded and more detailed analysis of the effects of ongoing snow mobile use on resources in the Final EIS.

We took a look at our Standards and Guidelines and revised a number of Standards and Guidelines based on the comments.

The revisions were primarily to clarify the intent and constraints in the Standards and Guidelines and to protect habitat.

So for an example we added standards for protection of Martin habitat that we did not have in the Draft EIS.

Another example we did receive comments that the proposed forest openings would become clear-cuts. So we took a look at our Standards and Guidelines and revised them to require retention of clumps of trees and single trees and to ensure that wildlife and other resources are considered in project design.

Now I'm going turn this over to Matt to talk about Alternative E.

Thanks Denise.

I'm going to explain the selected alternative, Alternative E in a little more detail.

In the Final EIS package of documents there is a Draft Record of Decision and in that Draft Record of Decision you can find an in depth discussion of Alternative E including some of the rationale used for its selection.

So to start with Alternative E we believe it builds on Alternative B from the Draft EIS and it builds on it based on what we heard during the comment period.

Similar to Alternative B it balances ecological, social and economic sustainability of the Basin.

Alternative E continues to recommend the seven mile segment of the Upper Truckee River for Wild River status.

It does not recommend new wilderness areas.

In Alternative E dispersed rec opportunities are similar to ones are currently available.

Specifically for winter dispersed rec opportunities we had about a fifty-fifty split currently between motorized and non-motorized activities and that will remain the same under Alternative E.

As Denise mentioned in the previous slide we did revise some Standards and Guides based on the comments received during the comment period to clarify our intent and constraints.

And finally Alternative E would add an additional backcountry area the Stanford Rock Back Country Area and it would also allow for a slight increase in developed recreation facilities.

These last two things I will talk about in a little more depth in the next couple of slides.

As I mentioned up Alternative E allows for recreation expansion.

In the Forest Plan which is Volume 2 of the FEIS document package, Standard and Guideline 100 was added to show the amount of rec expansion that would be allowed.

On this slide you can see the numbers of that are included in that Standard and Guideline 100.

These were based on current inventory of rec sites and areas.

Categories include developed rec sites, overnight accommodations units, day use parking and the operational footprint of ski areas and slopes.

Now, something to note about these numbers is that these are not specific to rec sites or areas but will be allocated based on a need that could be shown.

In order to exceed these numbers we would need to do a Forest Plan Amendment.

Now you can think of them kind of as a threshold where if we, where we would want to take another look at the effects if we were going to exceed these numbers.

Next slide.

Alternative E also includes the Stanford Rock Backcountry Area. This area was included in Alternative E and was also proposed by the public to be designated as Backcountry or Wilderness.

We felt the Backcountry designation made sense for Alternative E.

This area is about thirty six hundred acres and it's located on the west shore between Ward and Blackwood Creeks.

It is directly adjacent to the Granite Chief Wilderness Area.

For this Alternative E area we excluded wild land urban interface and planned fuel reduction projects.

So among the reasons it was chosen Backcountry designation was because it is almost entirely un-roaded.

There is only one road in the area which is not currently accessible and we didn't see a future need for management.

The area includes habitat for designated sensitive wildlife species including the Spotted Owl, Northern Goshawk and also includes two Santini-Burton parcels.

Now Santini-Burton parcels already have management restrictions in place which complement the Backcountry designation.

In addition to those reasons the Backcountry designation would also protect values associated with the Pacific Crest Trail and the Tahoe Rim Trail which also cross through that area.

Next slide.

Now I'm going shift gears a little bit.

Talk about forest plans in general what they do and what they don't do.

We are currently operating under the 1988 Forest Plan which as amended by the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment and the 2007 Management Indicator Species Amendment.

Once we sign the decision on this Forest Plan the 1988 Plan and those amendments will be replaced.

However, we are incorporating and carrying forward the Management Indicator Species Amendment in to the Revised Forest Plan.

So forest plans provide overall guidance and direction.

All projects and activities must be consistent with the Forest Plan.

You can find the Forest Plan as I mentioned in Volume 2 of the FEIS package of documents and the introduction to the Plan describes what it means to be consistent with the Forest Plan.

So if you're interested in that you can look that up in the FEIS package of documents.

So and finally forest plans, in and of themselves do not automatically allow us to fill the parking lot or cut any trees.

Project specific analysis is required for those things and with that I will turn it over back to Denise.

So, just to review a little bit about the objection period again.

It is an administrative review process.

It's similar to our appeal process but the main difference is that it takes place before the final decision is signed and this provides an additional opportunity for public participation just prior to the signing of the final decision.

On our Forest Plan Revision the Regional Forester is the decision maker.

That means that the Chief of the Forest Service is the Objection Reviewing Officer and so the objection process will be largely handled by our Washington Office.

Anyone who has provided substantive comment may file an objection.

Everyone is welcome to attend and observe the objection resolution meetings.

Objections must be filed in writing and you can find more information about how to file an objection on our Plan Revision website.

Objections must be filed between November 23, 2013 and January 21st 2014.

Locations of the objection resolution meetings as well as the times and dates will be announced later after we know more about the kinds of objections that we have and the number of people who are interested.

So with that I'm going to let Mike conclude our presentation.

Thank you very much.

That does conclude our formal presentation for the evening and now we're going move to a question answer period.

In a second Lisa will explain exactly what buttons to push to make that happen.

We had originally allotted a whole hour for the entire presentation and questions and answers so we have quite a bit of time left until, up for the questions.

I wanted to note that we will do a repeat presentation of this webinar on January 14th at 2:00 in the afternoon for hour and the recorded comments and discussion on this webinar will be posted on our website probably within a couple of days. So with that I'll let Lisa tell you how to ask your questions.

Thank you, Mike.

We hope you enjoyed the presentation.

Questions will now be taken through Live Meeting.

To type in your questions select Q & A from the menu bar at the top of the screen.

Questions will go in to a queue and will be answered in the order they are received.

Listen for me to read your question and then listen for the answer.

Okay we have a question.

Our first question is will this presentation be available on the website?

And yes we are looking to have this presentation posted within a couple of days of today so probably mid-week, to late this week it will be available.

It will be right on our home page and easy to find.

Okay I just want to ask if everyone understands how to submit their question.

Remember there is, at the top of the screen that says Q & A.

Just click on that it opens up a little window and you just type your question in there.

I would just like to add that if you would like to download this presentation you can look at the top of the menu bar.

You will see a button that says Handouts.

If you click on that you will be able to download the presentation to your computer.

Looks like we don't have many questions.

So again I just wanted to mention if you would like to ask a question look at the menu bar, click on Q & A and a little window will pop open and you can type in your question.

Okay we would like to give everyone a few more minutes to formulate the questions and submit them.

All right, well I'm seeing no questions.

We're going to wrap it up for this evening and I'll go home and get warm by the fire or by the gas stove as the case may be and thank you very much for participating.

Again January 14th at 2:00 o'clock we will do this again and tonight's presentation will be available on the website in a couple of days.

So thank you for your participation.

Have a good evening.